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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 TEGUCIGALPA 001863

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA, WHA/CEN, WHA/PPC, IO, AND INR/B

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINS](#) [PINR](#) [ECON](#) [HO](#)

SUBJECT: REPLACING PEREZ-CADALSO: HONDURAS SEEKS NEW FOREIGN MINISTER

REF: A. TEGUCIGALPA 1778

[1](#)B. TEGUCIGALPA 1108

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i., Roger Pierce;
Reasons 1.5 (B) and (D)

[1](#)1. (U) SUMMARY: Guillermo Perez-Cadalso Arias, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, is being sworn in this week as the president of the National Autonomous University of Honduras (UNAH). In order to make himself eligible for the position, Perez-Cadalso officially resigned as Foreign Minister on July 22, and Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Anibal Quinonez is now serving as the acting Minister. However, it is far from clear whether Quinonez will remain at the helm of the Foreign Ministry on a permanent basis. Rumor has it that others, such as Ramon Medina Luna, President Ricardo Maduro's National Security Advisor, and Oswaldo Ramos Soto, an influential member of the National Congress, are also in the running for the position. END SUMMARY

Perez-Cadalso

[1](#)2. (U) Guillermo Perez-Cadalso, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, is being sworn in this week as the president of the National Autonomous University of Honduras (UNAH). On July 22, in order to make himself available for the position, Perez-Cadalso presented his resignation to President Ricardo Maduro, who had appointed him Minister of Foreign Affairs in January 2002. Perez-Cadalso was not pressured into quitting, and has actually coveted the position of UNAH president for some time. The presidency of the university carries with it more domestic prestige, and Perez-Cadalso is an academic at heart, having led the UNAH's Law Department during the 1980s.

Quinonez and Other Possible Replacements

[1](#)3. (SBU) Anibal Quinonez is the Honduran Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs, and current acting head of the Ministry. Born January 7, 1950, he received a undergraduate degree in law from UNAH and a Master's degree in International Relations from the University of El Salvador in Argentina. Quinonez entered the Honduran Foreign Service in 1973, and served in Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, France, and Israel. In 1981 he was named Ambassador to Uruguay and served simultaneously as Non-Resident Ambassador to Paraguay until [1](#)1983. During his time in Uruguay, U.S. EmbOfs in Montevideo described him as a friend and admirer of the U.S. Quinonez was named Ambassador to Japan in 1985, and during his nine-year stay in Tokyo he also served as the Non-Resident Ambassador to South Korea, Philippines, Thailand, and Singapore. From 1995 to 1998 Quinonez served as the Director-General of Foreign Policy, and was named to his current post in 2002. He has been an excellent contact of the Embassy in this position. Quinonez is married and has four children.

[1](#)4. (S) Other names rumored to PolOfs as being in the running for the Minister position are Ramon Medina Luna and Oswaldo Ramos Soto. Medina Luna was also mentioned at the beginning of President Maduro's term as a possible Minister of Foreign Affairs before being named National Security Advisor. He is an experienced professional with considerable expertise in economic development and regional trade. (Medina Luna is married for a second time; his wife is Nicaragua. He has grown children from a previous marriage). Ramos Soto being considered as a possible successor to Perez-Cadalso is a bit more surprising. In April 1988 he allegedly incited a crowd that later burned down the Embassy annex after U.S. authorities captured (with Honduran Government approval) a Honduran narcotrafficker. Ramos Soto, then president of the UNAH, claims that he neither proposed nor approved of the action; he contends he merely told the students who became the nucleus of the mob that he believed the U.S. action was illegal. More recently, Ramos Soto raised eyebrows this spring when he used his position as the head of the National Congress' Commission on Constitutional Issues to advocate giving the Congress, rather than the Supreme Court, the power to interpret the constitution (ref B).

15. (C) COMMENT: While Quinonez would be a good choice, and Medina Luna acceptable, it would be difficult to work with Ramos Soto, who is from the "dark side" of the National Party, and about whom there are allegations of significant corruption. The Maduro Administration seems to be in no hurry to name a replacement to Perez-Cadalso (correspondingly, GOH attendance at UNGA is still in flux). Recently rocked by the defection of the Christian Democrats from the ruling coalition (ref A), grumbling within his own National Party, the resignation of Maduro confidant Cesar Batres, and the ominous departure of the First Lady on a trip to Spain (septel), attention within the Administration is focused primarily on damage control. Post will continue to monitor progress on any permanent replacement and will report accordingly. END COMMENT.
Pierce